

CLAIMS

1. An electronic apparatus having one or more functions on which use limitations can be imposed, comprising

a function executing unit for executing said function(s);

storage means for storing the contents of use limitations for said function(s);

and

limiting means for storing the contents of use limitations for said function(s), derived from input use-permitting key information, in said storage means, and for referencing the contents of use limitations stored in said storage means to limit function execution in said function executing unit.

2. The electronic apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the contents of use limitations for said functions are the number of days or times of use allowed for use or the time period allowed for use.

3. The electronic apparatus according to claim 2 further comprising

second storage means for storing the number of days or times said function(s) has been used in said function executing unit;

said controlling means when requested to execute the function(s) in said function executing unit referencing the contents of use limitations stored in said storage means and said number of days or times of use stored in said second storage means to control the function execution in said function executing unit.

4. The electronic apparatus according to claim 1 further comprising

an operating input unit for inputting said use-permitting key information supplied from a source of use permission.

5. The electronic apparatus according to claim 1 further comprising

a bar code readout unit for reading said use-permitting key information, printed as a bar code, supplied from said source of use permission.

6. The electronic apparatus according to claim 1 further comprising

an infrared light receiving unit for receiving said use-permitting key information, acquired from a source of use permission by wireless communication by a mobile terminal having a wireless communication function and an infrared ray communication function, said use-permitting key information being transmitted by infrared communication to the electronic apparatus.

7. The electronic apparatus according to claim 1 further comprising

receiving means for receiving said use-permitting key information transmitted from a source of use permission over a network.

8. An electronic apparatus having one or more functions on which use limitations can be imposed, comprising

a function executing unit for executing said function(s);
storage means for storing the contents of use limitations for said function(s);
transmitting means for transmitting apparatus identifying information for identifying the electronic apparatus and a request for permission for using the electronic apparatus over a network to a server of a source of use permission;

receiving means for receiving the use-permitting key information transmitted from said server responsive to said request for using the electronic apparatus; and controlling means for storing the contents of use limitations for said function(s), derived from input use-permitting key information, received by said receiving means, and for referencing the contents of use limitations stored in said storage means to limit function execution in said function executing unit.

9. The electronic apparatus according to claim 8 wherein the contents of use limitations for said function(s) are the number of days or times of use allowed for use or the time period allowed for use.

10. The electronic apparatus according to claim 9 further comprising second storage means for storing the number of days or times said function(s) has been used in said function executing unit; said controlling means when requested to execute the function(s) in said function executing unit referencing the contents of use limitations stored in said storage means and said number of days or times of use stored in said second storage means to control the function execution in said function executing unit.

11. The electronic apparatus according to claim 8 wherein said transmitting means and the receiving means are a mobile terminal having a wireless communication function and an infrared ray communication function; and wherein

 said electronic apparatus includes an infrared light receiving unit for

receiving said use-permitting key information acquired by said mobile terminal by wireless transmission from a source of use permission and transmitted by infrared communication.

12. A function controlling method for controlling the use of one or more functions owned by an electronic apparatus, said method comprising the steps of
 - transmitting the apparatus identifying information for identifying said electronic apparatus and a request for permitting the use of said function(s) to a source of use permission of said function(s) to a source of use permission;
 - receiving the use-permitting key information transmitted from said source of use permission responsive to said request for use permission; and
 - referencing the contents of use permission for said function(s), derived from said use-permitting key information, to control the use of said function(s).

13. The function controlling method according to claim 12 wherein
 - the contents of use permission for said functions are the number of days or times of use allowed or the time period allowed for use.
14. The function controlling method according to claim 13 further comprising a step of
 - storing the number of days or times of use of said function(s);
 - said controlling step referencing the contents of use permission and the number of days or times of use to control the use of said function(s).
15. A function controlling method for controlling the use of one or more functions

owned by an electronic apparatus, said method comprising the steps of transmitting the apparatus identifying information, identifying the electronic apparatus, and a request for use permission of said function(s), to a server as a source of use permission, over a network; and

referencing the use-permitting key information, transmitted from said server responsive to said request for use permission, to control the use of said function(s).

16. The function controlling method according to claim 15 wherein

the contents of use limitations for said function(s) are the number of days or times of use allowed or the time period allowed for use.

17. The function controlling method according to claim 16 further comprising a step of

storing the number of days or times of actually using said function(s);
said controlling step when requested to execute the function(s) referencing the contents of use permission and said number of days or times of use to limit the use of said function(s).

18. The function controlling method according to claim 15 wherein

said transmitting step transmits said apparatus identifying information and a request for use permission from a mobile terminal having a wireless communication function;

said receiving step receiving the use-permitting key information, transmitted from said server, from said mobile terminal, and transmitting the received

use-permitting key information to said electronic apparatus by an infrared ray communication function owned by said mobile terminal.

19. A method for controlling one or more functions owned by an electronic apparatus, comprising the steps of

receiving the apparatus identifying information for identifying the electronic apparatus and a request for use permission of said function(s), transmitted from said electronic apparatus; and

generating the use-permitting key information, responsive to said request for use permission, to send the use-permitting key information generated to said electronic apparatus.

20. The method for controlling the function(s) according to claim 19 wherein

the contents of use limitations for said functions are the number of days or times of use allowed for use or the time period allowed for use.

21. A method for controlling one or more functions owned by an electronic apparatus, comprising the steps of

having the apparatus identifying information for identifying the electronic apparatus and a request for use permission of said function(s) transmitted from a mobile terminal having a wireless communication function, and receiving said information and the request; and

generating use-permitting key information responsive to said contents of use permission to transmit the use-permitting key information to said mobile terminal.

22. The function controlling method according to claim 21 wherein the contents of use permission for said function(s) are the number of days or times of use allowed or the time period allowed for use.

23. A method for controlling one or more functions owned by an electronic apparatus, comprising the steps of

transmitting the apparatus identifying information for identifying the electronic apparatus and a request for use permission of said function(s) over a network to a server as a source of use permission;

said server generating the use-permitting key information for said function(s), responsive to said request for use permission, to send the use-permitting key information generated to said electronic apparatus; and

said electronic apparatus receiving said use-permitting key information and referencing said use-permitting key information to control the use of said function(s).

24. The method for controlling the function(s) according to claim 23 wherein the contents of use limitations for said functions are the number of days or times of use allowed or the time period allowed for use.

25. The method for controlling the function(s) according to claim 24 further comprising the step of

said electronic apparatus storing the number of days or times of using said function(s);

said controlling step referencing the contents of use permission or the number of days or times of use to control the use of said function(s).

26. The method for controlling the function(s) according to claim 23 wherein, in said transmitting step, said apparatus identifying information and the use permission information are transmitted from a mobile terminal having a wireless communication function; and wherein,

in said receiving step, the use permission information, transmitted from said server, is received by said mobile terminal; the use permission information received being transmitted to said electronic apparatus by an infrared ray communication function owned by said mobile terminal.

27. A server comprising

key generating means for generating use-permitting key information, controlling one or more functions, responsive to the apparatus identifying information for identifying the electronic apparatus and to a request for use permission of said function(s) owned by said electronic apparatus; and a management database for registration of the information concerning said electronic apparatus, inclusive of the apparatus identifying information, contents of use permission and the information indicating the issuing hysteresis of requests for use permission.

28. A server comprising

means for receiving the apparatus identifying information for identifying an

electronic apparatus, and a request for using one or more functions of said electronic apparatus, transmitted from said electronic apparatus, said functions being owned by said electronic apparatus and being those for which use limitations can be set;

key generating means for generating use-permitting key information, controlling said function(s), responsive to said request for use permission; and means for transmitting the use-permitting key information generated to said electronic apparatus.

29. A server comprising

means for having the apparatus identifying information for identifying an electronic apparatus, and a request for use permission of one or more functions of said electronic apparatus, transmitted from a mobile terminal having a wireless communication function, and receiving said information and the request, said functions being owned by said electronic apparatus and being such ones on which use limitations can be set;

key generating means for generating use-permitting key information, controlling said function(s), responsive to said contents of use permission; and means for transmitting the generated use-permitting key information to said mobile terminal.